



NEW YORK
STATE OF
OPPORTUNITY

**Department of
Environmental
Conservation**

Deer Hunting by 12- and 13- Year-Old Hunters

A Report to the New York State Senate and Assembly

February 22, 2022



Ava Woolston, age 12, with the deer she took in Orleans County during the 2021 Youth Big Game Hunt, mentored by her father. Ryan Woolston.

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Deer Hunting by 12- and 13-Year-Old Hunters

- Prepared by -

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The 2021 New York State Budget included legislation that adopted a new section of the Environmental Conservation Law (11-0935) authorizing a license holder who is twelve or thirteen years of age to hunt deer with a crossbow, rifle, shotgun, or muzzleloading firearm under the supervision of an experienced adult hunter in eligible areas. The legislation established this new opportunity as a pilot program through 2023 and required counties to adopt a local law authorizing participation and notify the department of such participation.

DEC is pleased to provide the following report to the legislature which highlights the success of the inaugural program and fulfills the requirement of Environmental Conservation Law 11-0935(3) which states, *"The department shall prepare a report by February first of each year including the following information at a minimum: number of violations; hunting related incidents and revocations pursuant to section 11-0719; the number of counties participating; the number of minors participating; and the number of deer taken."*

Preliminary Results from the 2021-22 Deer Hunting Seasons

Participation of 12- and 13-year-old deer hunters

# Licensed 12- and 13-year-old hunters ¹		9,859
Estimated Participation:	Regular Firearms Deer Season	85%
	Youth Big Game Hunt over Columbus Day Weekend	62%
	General Muzzleloader Deer Season	21%
	Holiday Hunt portion of the Late Muzzleloader Season	26%
	Bowhunting Season	31%
	With a Crossbow During any Season	18%
Deer Harvest Reports submitted by 12- and 13-year-old hunters ²		1,564

¹ License holders who were 12- or 13-years-old at any time during the 2021 hunting seasons when 12- and 13-year-old hunters could use a firearm or crossbow (September 12, 2021 through January 1, 2022).

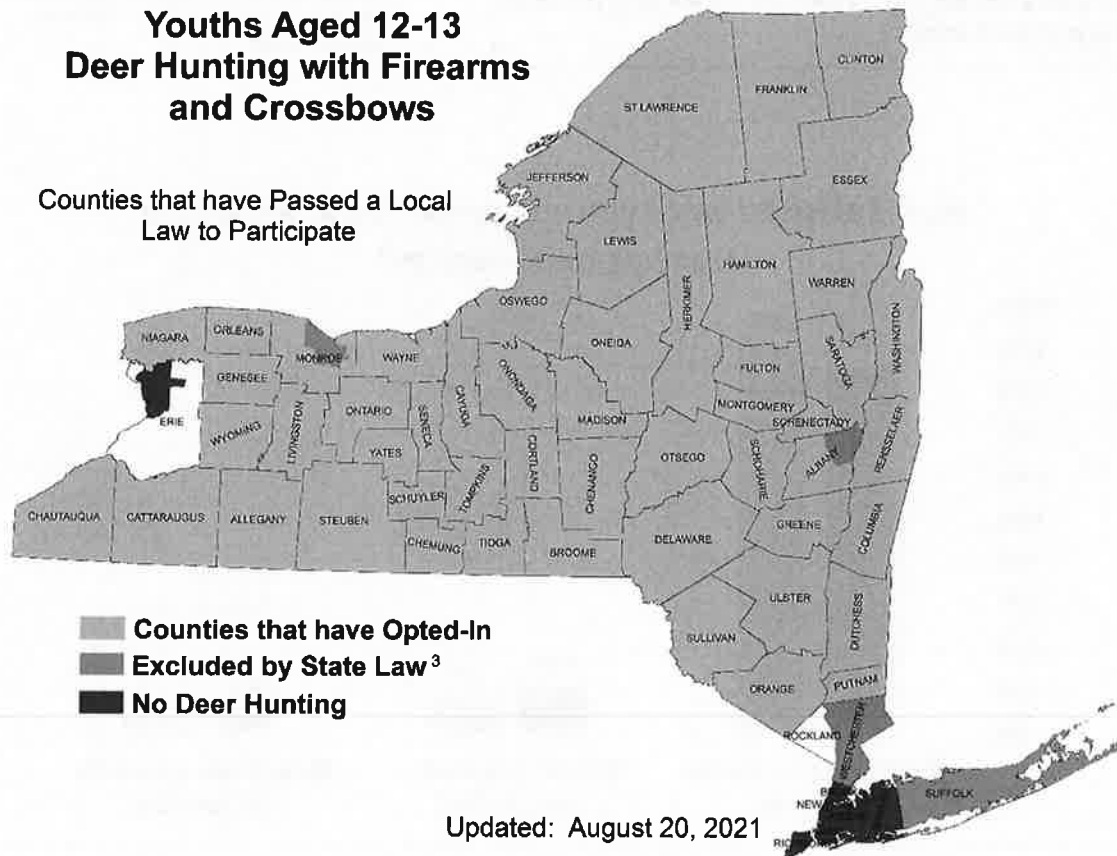
² Reported take value represents raw harvest reports with date of harvest between September 12, 2021 and January 1, 2022. This includes 173 deer reported taken with a bow. Calculated deer harvest was not available at the time of this report, as deer hunting seasons continued in portions of New York until January 31.

Safety and Compliance of 12- and 13-year-old deer hunters

Hunting related shooting incidents	0
Hunting violations	0
Hunting license revocations	0

County Participation

ECL 11-0935(2) defines eligible areas as: "a county that has passed a local law authorizing participation in the pilot program and has notified the department of such participation, however, that the following counties: Westchester; Richmond; Bronx; New York; Kings; Queens; Nassau; and Suffolk shall not be deemed to be eligible." Thus, 54 of the 62 New York State counties were eligible to participate in the pilot program. Of the 54 eligible counties, only Erie and Rockland county did not pass a local law to allow 12- and 13-year-olds to hunt deer with a firearm or crossbow.



³ Portions of Albany and Monroe counties were excluded by state laws (ECL 11-0907(5)(a) and 11-0907(7)(b)) that restrict deer hunting in those areas to use of longbows only.

"Best thing NYS has done for youths in NYS. Great to have the kids enjoying the outdoors."

"Had a great time teaching and enjoying the extra time with son. Thanks again."

"I got to spend time with my grandfather and although we did not score a deer just being in our woods was fun."

"It's a great way to get the young generation to hunt."

"Love the early opportunity with my father. Great bonding experience."

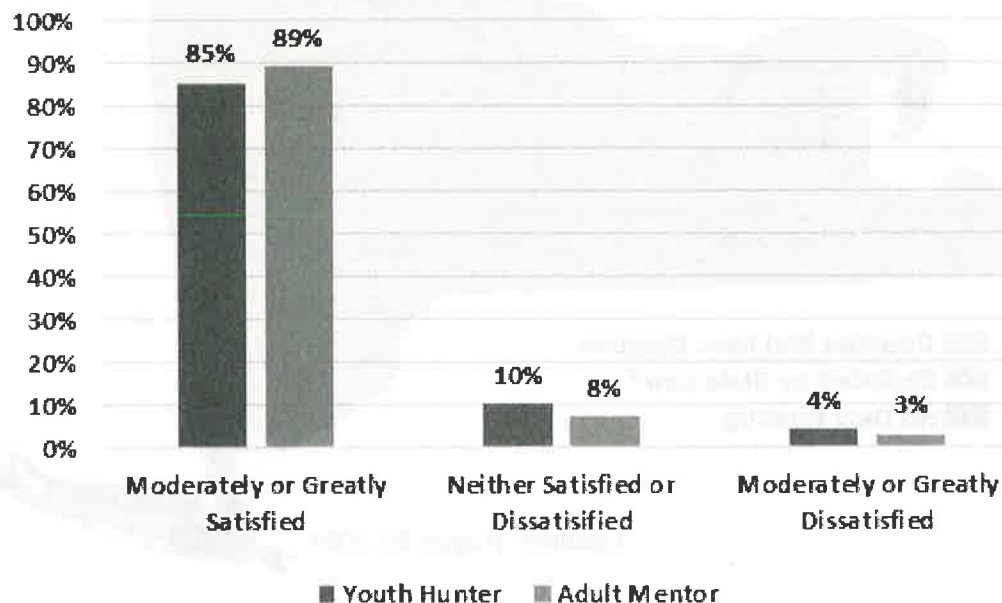
"The youth hunt is great...I think it builds a great trust and cooperation between DEC officers, young hunters and their parents, that extends well beyond the weekend. Great experience."

"This was a great opportunity. Thank you for allowing this and promoting younger hunters."



Holland B. from Ontario County got her first doe and buck in 2021. "What an amazing year!"

How Satisfied were you with your Youth Big Game Hunting experiences?



Recommendations

As evidenced in this report, it is clear that 12- and 13-year-old hunters can safely and successfully hunt deer with a firearm or crossbow and should be authorized to retain this important opportunity. In order to continue to cultivate the next generation of safe and responsible hunters and capitalize on the success of this program, DEC provides the following recommendations to expand youth hunting opportunities in New York:

- 1- **Make permanent the authorization for 12- and 13-year-old hunters to hunt deer with a firearm and crossbow.** We assessed participation and harvest by junior big game hunters through a post-season survey and asked about their level of satisfaction with their big game hunting opportunities in 2021. More than 9,800 young hunters (aged 12 and 13), representing approximately 9,500 families were eligible to hunt deer with a firearm or crossbow in 2021. These hunters were safe and successful, and satisfaction levels were extremely high. 85% of these young hunters and 89% of their adult mentors reported being moderately or greatly satisfied with their youth big game hunting experience this past year. Existing state law permanently allows hunters aged 12 and 13 to hunt small game with a firearm or long bow and big game with a long bow, when properly supervised. Establishing the same permanent provisions for 12- and 13-year-old hunters to hunt big game with a firearm will ensure that 12-year-olds can continue to hunt big game when they are 13 and that younger siblings have the same opportunity when they turn 12.
- 2- **Allow 12- and 13-year-old hunters to also hunt black bear with a firearm and crossbow.** Youths aged 12 and 13 have been legally able to hunt black bears with a longbow in New York since 2011 and have done so without incident. Hunting black bear with a longbow is unquestionably more challenging than hunting black bear with a firearm. Nonetheless, 12- and 13-year-old hunters have routinely demonstrated that they can safely and successfully harvest a black bear with a longbow. These same hunters, and all 12- and 13-year-old hunters, should be given the opportunity to also hunt black bear with firearms and crossbows.
- 3- **Extend the authorization for 12- and 13-year-old hunters to hunt deer with a firearm or crossbow to all of New York State (subject to other provisions of ECL) and remove the requirement for counties to pass a local law opting-in.** Of all the eligible counties in New York, only Erie and Rockland Counties did not pass a local law authorizing participation in the pilot program as required by 11-0935. However, in both of these counties, hunters aged 14-years or older can hunt deer and bear with firearms and crossbows. Similarly, Westchester and Suffolk Counties were specifically excluded from the provisions of 11-0935 despite an existing firearms season for deer in January in Suffolk County and provisions in 11-0903(7) authorizing the same potential opportunity in Westchester County. Young hunters in Erie, Rockland, Suffolk, and Westchester counties should not be forced to hunt elsewhere and should be given opportunity to hunt in the same locations and in the same manner as their peers, older siblings, and other family members.

Section 1

The purpose of this document is to provide a comprehensive overview of the project's objectives, scope, and timeline. The document is organized into several sections, each detailing a specific aspect of the project. The first section, 'Introduction', outlines the project's goals and the importance of the work. The second section, 'Scope', defines the boundaries of the project and the resources available. The third section, 'Timeline', provides a detailed schedule of the project's activities and milestones. The fourth section, 'Conclusion', summarizes the key findings and recommendations. The fifth section, 'References', lists the sources of information used in the project. The sixth section, 'Appendix', contains additional data and documents related to the project. The seventh section, 'Glossary', defines the terms and abbreviations used throughout the document. The eighth section, 'Index', provides a quick reference to the various sections of the document. The ninth section, 'Bibliography', lists the books and articles cited in the project. The tenth section, 'Footnotes', contains additional information and references. The eleventh section, 'Endnotes', provides a final summary of the project's findings and conclusions. The twelfth section, 'Index', provides a comprehensive list of the project's activities and milestones. The thirteenth section, 'Appendix', contains additional data and documents related to the project. The fourteenth section, 'Glossary', defines the terms and abbreviations used throughout the document. The fifteenth section, 'Index', provides a quick reference to the various sections of the document. The sixteenth section, 'Bibliography', lists the books and articles cited in the project. The seventeenth section, 'Footnotes', contains additional information and references. The eighteenth section, 'Endnotes', provides a final summary of the project's findings and conclusions.

The project is a complex and multi-faceted endeavor that requires a high level of coordination and communication. The project team is composed of individuals with diverse backgrounds and expertise, each bringing their own strengths and perspectives to the table. The project's success is dependent on the ability of the team to work together effectively, sharing information and resources, and maintaining a clear and consistent vision of the project's goals and objectives. The project's timeline is a critical factor in determining the project's success, as it provides a clear and concise schedule of the project's activities and milestones. The project's scope is a key consideration in determining the project's success, as it defines the boundaries of the project and the resources available. The project's introduction is a key component of the project's success, as it outlines the project's goals and the importance of the work. The project's conclusion is a key component of the project's success, as it summarizes the key findings and recommendations. The project's references are a key component of the project's success, as they list the sources of information used in the project. The project's appendix is a key component of the project's success, as it contains additional data and documents related to the project. The project's glossary is a key component of the project's success, as it defines the terms and abbreviations used throughout the document. The project's index is a key component of the project's success, as it provides a quick reference to the various sections of the document. The project's bibliography is a key component of the project's success, as it lists the books and articles cited in the project. The project's footnotes are a key component of the project's success, as they contain additional information and references. The project's endnotes are a key component of the project's success, as they provide a final summary of the project's findings and conclusions.

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